OBJECTIVE 4.2 Identify factors involved when conducting a vehicle pursuit.

INTRODUCTION

Once an officer decides to initiate a vehicular pursuit, professional pursuit driving tactics and strategies must be utilized. Lacking this knowledge will increase the officer's probability of being involved in a collision and diminish the chances of conducting a pursuit. Officers should become familiar with the factors involved in conducting a vehicular pursuit. A working knowledge of these factors will greatly enhance the officer's chance of conducting a pursuit successfully and safely.

CONTENT

CONDUCTING PURSUIT–RECOMMENDED PURSUIT STRATEGIES

1. Generally, no more than two (2) law enforcement vehicles involved in direct pursuit. This will prevent caravanning which serves no useful purpose, is dangerous, and looks silly to the press and public.

2. The pursuit should be conducted by officers who are not emotionally involved. Upon determining that an officer has displayed an inappropriate attitude or behavior, that officer should be removed or replaced if the pursuit is to be continued.

3. Unmarked vehicles, covert surveillance vehicles, vans, motorcycles and law enforcement vehicles with civilian passengers should not be involved in the pursuit. If the pursuit is initiated by an unmarked vehicle, the unmarked vehicle should relinquish the pursuit to the first available marked vehicle.

4. Inability to see approaching traffic at an intersection requires a full stop prior to proceeding.

5. No intentional contact with the violator vehicle; i.e., P.I.T. maneuvers, ramming, blocking, fixed or moving roadblocks should be initiated, unless deadly force is authorized or required, and the officer is trained in the maneuver.

6. No shooting at, or from, moving vehicles unless agency policy authorizes and the officer is in conformance with the state deadly force statutes.

7. Emergency warning devices should be in operation at all times. The officer needs to remember that emergency 4-way flashers in operation will prevent the cruiser from signaling directional changes.

8. Maintain good driving techniques, both hands on the steering wheel, proper use of restraining devices, and proper braking.

9. The interior of the law enforcement vehicle must remain free of loose objects. In case of a collision, any loose object inside the vehicle is a potential missile which can severely injure any occupants.

COMMUNICATION TACTICS

Professional communication is one of the primary keys to the successful termination of a pursuit. Using communications effectively in the pursuit environment has two primary goals, either of which may involve the coordinated activities of other law enforcement agencies, vehicles and officers: (1) to enhance the safe passage of the pursuit along the trafficway; or (2) to enhance the likelihood of apprehension by eliminating possible avenues of escape for the fleeing driver.

1. Communication with the public will be maintained through the use of the patrol vehicle's emergency warning devices. When properly used, emergency warning devices may enhance the officer's ability to maneuver in traffic and reduce the risk to self and others.

2. Officers should refer to state statutes and agency policy that regulates the operation of emergency equipment.

3. Officers should never approach and pass another vehicle on the right when emergency warning devices on the law enforcement vehicle are in operation.

    a. Even during daylight, headlights should be used in conjunction with emergency overhead lights.

        (1) Headlights are usually more discernible than required red or blue lights, both the overheads and dash mounts, in the daytime.

        (2) Most drivers will see headlights before they hear the siren or see the red or blue lights.

(3) Although the emergency flasher lights may be helpful, their use will eliminate the availability of the electronic turn signals.

b. During hours of darkness, high beam headlights have a tendency to obliterate the emergency lights and blind oncoming drivers.

c. Emergency warning devices such as the lights and sirens are not substitutes for caution and utilization of professional driving skills, nor do they relieve the officer from the general duty of exercising due care with regard to the safety of others.

d. Various factors affect the siren's audibility and the light's visibility.

(1) Weather conditions

(a) The siren may be heard sooner on an overcast or cloudy day.

(b) Siren audibility tends to dissipate into the atmosphere on clear days.

(c) Fog will allow sound to carry through its moisture with a minimum loss of decibels at close range. The greater the distance, however, the greater the sound blockage.

(d) Emergency lights are virtually ineffective in foggy weather.

(e) Inclement weather of any kind greatly reduces the value of lights and siren. The quality of the driving then becomes even more critical.

(2) Vehicular traffic conditions

(a) Sirens become less discernible with the increase of traffic noise.

(b) Large vehicles, such as heavy trucks and buses, will decrease the effectiveness of the siren.

(3) Location

(a) The siren may be less discernible in a residential area. Large trees and hedges tend to absorb sound.

(b) Tall buildings tend to block out, deflect, or tunnel sound transmission. When this occurs, the value of the siren is diminished.

(c) In flat, open areas the sound of a siren can be heard for a greater distance.

(4) Pedestrian traffic conditions

(a) Emergency lights may not adequately warn pedestrians.

(b) Sirens offer greater warning to pedestrian traffic.

(c) Great care and caution must be taken in areas congested with foot traffic.

(d) The use of warning devices in school zones is enhanced by a reduction in speed.

e. Citizens, with respect to driver and pedestrian awareness, are not always attentive, so they may not see or hear an emergency warning device. They may be distracted by one or more of the following:

(1) Child passengers misbehaving

(2) Conversation with passengers

(3) High radio volume (Walkman)

(4) Air conditioner or heater fan noise

(5) Windows rolled up

(6) Construction

(7) Law enforcement or emergency vehicle activity in another area

(8) Sight-seeing

Remember, the public may respond to the officer's warning by panic stopping, panic steering or sudden acceleration.

f. As speed increases, the effectiveness of the siren decreases.

(1) Due to the increase of speed and the resultant increase in feet per second traveled by the pursuing law enforcement vehicle, other drivers and pedestrians may not have sufficient time to react to the sound of the siren.

(2) As speed increases, a driver may not hear the siren until the officer is one or two car lengths behind the vehicle. Additionally, more aerodynamic vehicles make less "wind noise" at higher speeds than older model police vehicles.

(3) As the officer's speed increases, the chance of having a collision increases, and the time for processing information and decision-making decreases.

(4) In a test conducted for the U. S. Department of Transportation, test results indicated:

(a) Approximately 91% of *pedestrians* could tell where the siren noise was coming from.

(b) Only 26% of *drivers*, with the windows rolled up, could tell there the siren noise was coming from.

(c) Distance effectiveness deteriorated remarkably. Under ideal traffic test conditions, the maximum distance the siren was audible was 440 feet. When all the test subjects' scores were compared, the *average* distance was 125 feet.

g. The emergency warning devices, lights and siren, also affect the officer's behavior.

(1) Tunnel vision develops at high speed and the officers tend to forget that the emergency warning devices are operating.

(2) Speed reference is lost due to the limitation of the sounds of speed, such as wind and engine noise.

(3) Officers must not succumb to the "Invincibility Syndrome." The use of emergency warning devices may provide a false sense of security. These warning devices are there to benefit the public. The responsibility for safe and professional driving rests with the officer.

4. Communications with other law enforcement officers is critical for pursuit termination. Once the law enforcement officer has observed the violation occur and has decided to stop the violator's vehicle, effective use of the law enforcement radio is usually the only source of communications with the telecommunicator and other officers. Its effective use is crucial to the success of any pursuit.

   a. The officer will need to master one acceptable way of utilizing the radio in pursuit situations. Individual agency policy and procedure may differ because of varying requirements. When the officers return to their individual agencies, they should learn and master those requirements and follow them. Accurate and precise use of the law enforcement radio in a pursuit situation is more critical because it can:

      (1) Improve the officer's effectiveness in conducting a pursuit

      (2) Increase the likelihood of obtaining help when it is needed

      (3) Make the difference between a successful pursuit termination or an unsuccessful pursuit termination.

   b. To achieve maximum effectiveness, this communications process should begin once the law enforcement officer has observed the violation occur and has decided to stop the violator's vehicle. The telecommunicator should be advised of:

      (1) The identity of the law enforcement officer making the violator stop

      (2) The identity of the violator's vehicle: make, model, year, color, number of doors, any distinguishing marks or characteristics, and registration number

      (3) The current location and direction of travel

      (4) The occupants - number and description

      (5) The reason for the stop (in specific terms)

      (6) The anticipated stop location

   c. This information is vital should the traffic stop result in a pursuit situation. It is also good procedure even when the violator complies with the officer's signal to stop. Whenever possible, all this information should be communicated before the officer actually gives the violator the signal to stop. More often than not, it is the activation of the emergency

warning devices in signaling the violator driver to stop that escalates the traffic stop into a pursuit situation. In addition to providing vital information should an actual pursuit ensue, communicating this information before the traffic stop gives the officer one less set of tasks to perform during the conduct of the pursuit, allowing the officer to focus and concentrate upon safe driving practices.

d. Once a pursuit has begun, presuming the foregoing information has been provided as suggested, the officer's communications responsibilities shift to keeping the telecommunication center and other officers advised of the status of the ongoing pursuit. To ensure effective communications, officers must remain aware of:

(1) Radio transmission accuracy - It is important that any information the officer transmits over the radio be as accurate as possible. Inaccurate information may cause other officers to take inappropriate action and can result in a delay when requesting help or assistance.

(2) Tone of voice - Regardless of how accurate and brief the message, when it cannot be understood by the telecommunicator or other officers, it is of no value. The tone of voice should be calm, natural and relaxed.

(3) Control of emotion - The officer must maintain a professional demeanor when transmitting during a pursuit situation. The officer should always strive to be calm. A calm voice is easier to understand than an excited one. The more critical the situation the officer is reporting, the more important it is to transmit clearly. In stressful situations, the rate of speech frequently increases. Consequently, the officer must attempt to control emotions so that everyone hears and understands the transmission. Taking several deep breaths prior to a radio transmission will help in controlling rate of speech.

(4) Environmental factors - There are a number of environmental conditions which may impact upon the quality of the officer's radio transmission. Some common conditions are:

(a) The siren on

(b) Heavy traffic

(c) Sudden acceleration

(d) Talkative partner

(e) Tall buildings

(5) Transmission content. The agency's policy will be the best source of determining exactly what information is to be transmitted during a pursuit. Brevity and conciseness are key factors in effective communications. Transmit only the information required. If not directly involved in the pursuit, remain off the radio. All personnel should allow the frequency to remain free of unnecessary radio traffic.

(6) Law enforcement radio equipment. The law enforcement radio's volume should be turned higher during a pursuit. Other noises such as the AM/FM radio or opened windows should be eliminated. Care should be taken to install the radio controls and microphone in a position that affords easy access without visually looking for them. The microphone should remain secured in its holder when not in use.

e. The team approach. As an old saying goes, "A car cannot outrun a radio." This saying exemplifies effective communications. The critical participants in the pursuit, and in the resulting radio communications, are the telecommunicator and the officer(s) involved. During the pursuit portion of the communications process, anticipation is the key. Officers involved in pursuits have a tendency to communicate where they have been, rather than where they believe they are going, and that is useless information during the pursuit situation. Cross streets should be announced as they are approached along the pursuit's route. The lane position of the fleeing vehicle is an important clue as to its intended action and possible direction of travel. Heavy traffic congestion can literally force the fleeing driver to follow a particular course of travel. Vehicle speed should be periodically announced as a matter of record and to advise other officers, and supervisors, of the progress of the pursuit and its anticipated approach to their location.

(1) Assignment of assisting law enforcement officers should be handled by the telecommunications center.

(2) Communications between officers not directly involved in the pursuit should be restricted to that which is absolutely necessary.

(3) To the fullest extent possible, the driver of the primary pursuit vehicle should be free to devote his full attention to the driving task. To facilitate this goal, a secondary pursuit vehicle should be assigned to the active pursuit. This secondary pursuit vehicle should have three primary responsibilities:

(a) Provide backup to the primary vehicle if and when the violator vehicle is stopped

(b) Take over the pursuit from the primary vehicle should it suffer a mechanical breakdown

(c) Assume the pursuit communications responsibilities from the primary pursuit vehicle

f. Lastly, and often the forgotten element of pursuit communications, is the need to communicate when and where the pursuit is terminated. A pursuit does not end when the violator's vehicle is stopped.

(1) If the violator attempts to flee on foot, assisting officers need to know where the foot pursuit started.

(2) If the arresting officer(s) need additional assistance in establishing control, their exact location is needed.

As important as radio communications is, it can not exceed the importance of safe patrol vehicle operations. Safety must take precedence over all else.

FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Following distance will initially be close, approximately two (2) seconds, the normal following distance, from the violator's vehicle. This distance should be established as soon as practical. At this distance the violator's vehicle, and its occupants, can easily be observed. Reducing the following distance below this interval is extremely dangerous and not recommended. The following distance should be increased as the pursuit speed and duration increase. A following distance of three (3) to four (4) seconds will still allow the officer to observe the vehicle while increasing the reaction distance from the violator's vehicle.

The pursuing officer should not attempt to apply psychological pressure on the violator by closing the following distance. There is no substantial advantage to this tactic and it exposes the violator, officer, and public to unnecessary danger.

SPEED

Speed will vary depending upon the existing conditions. Although the speed of the violator's vehicle will greatly influence pursuit speed, the pursuit officer must remember that the pursuit is not a race.

In most pursuit situations, the overwhelming urge motivating the law enforcement officer is to catch the violator. When officers focus upon "catching" the fleeing violator, a phenomenon known as *speed progression* is likely to occur. This is where the speed of the vehicles involved in the pursuit seems to increase almost as a matter of geometric progression. The faster the fleeing violator goes attempting to escape the officer(s), the faster the officer(s) must to go to attempt to catch the violator, and the faster the violator goes to continue to increase the interval and escape. In this situation, both the violator's and officer's emotions are usually out of control. The idea is to sustain the pursuit without losing control of the pursuit.

Pacing a fleeing violator involves establishing and maintaining a safe following distance behind the violator's vehicle that will permit the pursuing officer to keep the vehicle in sight until assistance arrives. This tactic reduces the likelihood that the speed progression phenomenon will occur. The tactic may also reduce the radical driving maneuvers by the fleeing violator attempting to escape,

and should allow the pursuing officer to retain a semblance of control over the situation. In addition, pacing allows assisting officers to get into position to provide meaningful assistance. More often than not, it is the visible presence of the other law enforcement officers that convinces the fleeing violator that he or she cannot escape, and that surrender is the only alternative.

Pursuing officers must be familiar with their patrol areas, think ahead of the pursuit, and be prepared to adjust their speed in advance to enable maneuvering through intersections, curves and other obstacles. Officers should be aware of the vehicle's speed prior to any curves. Avoid crossing the center line, applying the brakes in curves, and approaching intersections at high speeds.

PATROL VEHICLE POSITION

The patrol vehicle's position in traffic must continuously be adjusted. Proper positioning of the patrol vehicle in relation to other vehicles on the highway allows for increased visibility for the officer, increased visibility of the patrol vehicle for the public, and an escape route should the officer's path-of-travel become blocked.

TUNNEL VISION

Tunnel vision may occur as a result of increased concentration on the violator's vehicle, to the level of actually duplicating all the decisions and driving techniques made by the fleeing driver. Officers must recognize and avoid duplicating the violator's unsafe or intentionally hazardous driving tactics. Tactics used by fleeing drivers may include:

1. A **bee line flight** by simply attempting to outrun, or outdistance, the pursuing officer

2. The violator may accelerate to a high speed, lose sight of the pursuing officer, and then stop. This may lead to the violator's changing positions within the violator vehicle, fleeing on foot, or attempting to hide the vehicle

3. Timing, or delaying, driving maneuvers in an attempt to cause an innocent third party to collide with the pursuing officer

4. Intentional violation of motor vehicle laws: driving in the wrong lane, driving on the wrong side of a divided highway, driving the wrong way on a one-way street, driving off the roadway, driving across private property, violating speed limits and ignoring traffic control.

5. Using his or her vehicle as a weapon against the pursuing officer

SUMMARY

Numerous factors must be considered when conducting a vehicle pursuit. Some generally-accepted pursuit policy guidelines were adopted in principle by the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1996. Foremost among these are that pursuit strategies should utilize no more than two vehicles in direct pursuit. Many other features of a contemporary pursuit policy are contained in the IACP's 1996 "Sample Policy." Students and instructors alike are encouraged to review the sample policy and to compare it with existing law and policies, noting where each may differ and why.

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

LECTURE

Use the suggested text as a guide for presentation to the class. Supplement this text with the statutory requirements and agency policy that affects the class. Further, the instructor may wish to review the IACP Sample Policy and encourage a student discussion of what may or may not work well in their respective jurisdictions.

SMALL GROUPS

Divide the class into groups of 3 - 6 students. Ask the students to list factors that will affect their ability to conduct a pursuit. List the responses on a chalkboard/flip chart.

CLASS DISCUSSION

Using videos of actual pursuits from patrol vehicles equipped with cameras, have the class identify the factors that would affect their ability to conduct a pursuit. These videos should include both motor vehicle law and criminal violations, if possible. Ask the students to identify their attitudes, emotions and desire to apprehend the violator for each situation. As their answers may be controversial, and because seldom will the entire class be in agreement, discussion may exist individually or in the form of a class debate. The answers are not as important as their ability to identify those factors that impact on their ability to conduct a pursuit.

RESOURCES AND TRAINING AIDS

1. State statutes
2. Agency policies
3. Pursuit films and videos
4. Driving simulator
5. Interactive computer program
6. 1996 IACP Sample Pursuit Guidelines

SUGGESTED EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

STUDENT

1. Written responses to questions regarding factors to consider when conducting a pursuit
2. Using a driving simulator or an interactive computer program, provide the student with situations that will involve factors to consider when conducting a vehicular pursuit
3. Performance evaluation during a simulated pursuit training exercise

COURSE

1. Review of agency emergency/pursuit response data.

Conducting Pursuits Recommended Strategies

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- The Pursuit should be conducted by officers who are ***not*** emotionally involved.
- Unmarked vehicles, motorcycles and law enforcement vehicles with civilians should ***not*** be involved in the pursuit.

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- Maintain good driving techniques, both hands on the steering wheel, proper use of restraining devices, and proper braking.

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- The interior of the law enforcement vehicle must be free of loose objects.

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- Approximately 91% of pedestrians could tell where the siren noise was coming from.
- Only 26% of drivers, with the windows rolled up, could tell where the siren noise was coming from.

Conducting Pursuits Recommended Strategies

- Emergency warning devices, lights and siren, also affect the officer's behavior.
- Tunnel vision develops at high speed and the officers tend to forget that the emergency warning devices are operating.
- Speed reference is lost due to the limitations of the sounds of speed, such as wind and engine noise.

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- Officers must not succumb to the "Invincibility Syndrome." The use of emergency warning devices may provide a false sense of security. These warning devices are there to benefit the public. ***The responsibility for safe and professional driving rest with the officer.***